Love Crime On Fire

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Love Crime On Fire

by AntlerVelvet0425

Summary

It's 1950s Uk and Will Graham is a retired vampire hunter for the police who occasionally helps out with murder cases. Vampires were supposed to be wiped out 6 years ago but recent crimes start to suggest otherwise. Will is consulted on the murders and seeks the advice of his new friend, Hannibal Lecter, who works in a crematorium near the police station. But is Hannibal what he appears to be?

Notes

My first fanfic so i'm not sure on the pacing of it. Advice is appreciated :) More action to come in later chapters.

Optional chapter (skippable but provides background)

The phone rang. It's scratchy tone usurping the noise on the radio and grasping Will's attention instantly. Unenthusiastically, he wandered over to the telephone atop an oak corner table, raising it up to his ear.
"Hello?" his low voice inquired, "What's the matter, Jack?" He knew if Jack was calling, then there must be a new case, he wasn't treated like a close friend after all. As expected, the man's response was one filled with that tone you use when you're about to ask for a favour,

"Ah, Will, we've a issue at the lab. All the evidence leads to a clear murderer, but she has vanished. I was hoping you might...take a look." This wasn't an uncommon occurrence; when the detectives and the lab needed an extra opinion, they asked Will to help. He retired from the field 6 years ago but that didn't seem to deter anybody from asking. And he just couldn't refuse, it felt selfish to deny help that could save others. "I'll put my coat on," "Fantastic, I will meet you outside the main entrance." He cloaked himself in silence and made his way out the door. Frosty September air clutched at his nose and the pattering of paws inside his house drew more faint as he walked away into the late afternoon darkness.

"This way," the broad man gestured for Will to follow him and began walking immediately. "The body of Mr Fletcher was found in the couple's house, underneath the bedsheets. It must have been a day or so since all blood was dry and our number one suspect ran off before we even knew about the murder," Jack explained, glancing at Will to ensure he was keeping up. They navigated the lab before coming to a glossy white door labelled 'Brian Zeller' but simply walked straight through. A central table stood with a blanket draped over a mound on top of it: the body, Will presumed.

Dr Zeller, a familiar colleague of Will's, drew back the cloth to reveal a pale, ghastly body with an open gash on its throat. Where eyes once gleamed, dark sockets housed no trace of soul, where fingerprints should be, charred circles intruded the purity of his skin, and by far the most unsettling: where his manhood would have resided, an amateur patch of stitching closed the pelvis up. All the men shifted in their trousers, almost to check that their own penis was still attached. Will swallowed and searched the rest of the room with his eyes. He came across a desk, and a large bookshelf behind a glass wall-likely there to prevent dust contamination. The books' spines were detailed with intricate lettering about a variety of subjects including an atlas and many copies of medical journals. After admiring the shelves of novels, his gaze moved down to a second small table, this one with no blanket covering it. It was clear now the the suspect had not kept ay trophies from the body, as there, in the cold laboratory light, laid the lifeless member of the victim. Perhaps it wasn't about her wanting it for herself, but him not deserving to keep it?

Jacks loud voice interrupted Will's thoughts, "We know that it was Mrs Anna Fletcher that removed his...well I'm sure you know what I mean. We found letters between her husband and another woman scattered around the body and a hair in the wound which matches exactly with other hairs we found around the house. Same length and colour. What we don't know, is where our murderer has decided to run off to. That's why you are here." The rambling flow of words continued, " I know you have a talent for getting into these peoples' heads, so I believe

you can find her. I trust I am correct in that assumption?" Silence encased the room while Will pondered the facts. He had the pieces but was lacking the board. "Take me to their house. I need to see the scene before I can help, please." Although lacking in distinction, his humble confidence could be felt through his words. His boisterous co-worker let out a single laugh and slapped his hands on his thighs, "we better get going then, my car, there's no time to lose!"

Dark blues in the sky faded to black and Will slept for the entire duration of the journey. (mind you, it was only an hour and a half.) Once the crunch of gravel and low thrum of the engine stopped, he slowly, and groggily, climbed out of the vehicle and made his way to the door. It was a building of old Victorian origin; a porch with steps and thin columns funnelled visitors closer to the fine, varnished door, nestled between fantastic alcoves and white-edged rectangular windows that decorated the exterior. Jack entered first, with a large flashlight, and the scruffy detective followed, through a multitude of rooms all furnished with exquisite paintings and yellowed photographs of the couple. A tall, deep wooden bookshelf leaned into the billiard room, and up the staircase, into the master bedroom, a thick, rouge carpet followed the path that the two men took.

Around him, the world reset. His eyes saw a story he couldn't change. And his body moved to demonstrate it. All emotion he felt was not his, and yet each prick of sadness and anger was felt as deeply as the partaker. His breathing slowed and with one blink, he was planning a holiday with Mr Fletcher, excited to be travelling somewhere new. Another blink and he peered around a doorframe, watching the husband write letters upon their bed, mumbling some of the words out loud. 'trip', 'forest', 'dear', 'your birthday'. His jaw clenched, knowing that Anna's birthday was not this month or next. With a tightening gut and clouded eyes, Will stumbled away. He hid the plans, now that he didn't need them, somewhere in the bookcase. He blinked once more and was dusting, or maybe pretending to, around Mr fletcher's bedside table. Knowing he would be alone for another half hour, he scoured the drawers in search of the truth. His breaths grew frantic as shaky hands stroked rough brown paper in the bottom drawer. He had his answer. But he read on. Pages of proof of losing love. Sentences filled with words that broke his heart.

The jangle of keys.

No longer alone, but still overwhelmed with emotion, Will ran to the kitchen and took out the first aid kit and a carving knife.

The closing of a door.

There was no doubt in his mind as he hurried back to the bedroom and stuffed his retrieval under the bed. "Oh, Ronnie, won't you come to bed? I have been awfully missing you." his voice was feminine and mimicked Anne's. "Anne you know I love you, but I'm not in the mood. I'm coming in to get changed into something more casual." At this he felt rage. The lies he said so easily tore further into Will's mind and he grabbed the carving knife from under the bed. As soon as Ronnie entered, Will sprang upon him and sliced hungrily at his neck. His passion and heartbreak fuelled him and he held Ronnie while he bled out. After it was over, he lay the body down on the bed and took off his trousers. He used the knife to puncture the pelvic skin and tear off his penis. The flesh stretched and squelched at the

movement of it, and blood soaked into the fabric of the bed. Will bent down to collect the first aid kit and removed a needle and surgical thread from within. Brushing a curl of hair from out of his vision, he began to sew. Each little prod through the skin felt like popping a bubble, releasing the tension and being free. The man's front came together messily but with strength and satisfaction, until the horror of what had just happened washed over him. If he were to be caught, he would be hanged, publicly. Humiliated and tortured in front of all those willing to watch. And after, his body would be burned and the ashes mixed with water to form a fertilizer. A breath caught in his throat and he hurried out of the room, knocking the member onto the pile of letters, dispersing them. While racing down the stairs and through the house to run away, he glanced at the bookshelf and knew where to go.

"She's at their holiday site." Will shook his head gently as he spoke, using his hands as well, "They spoke of a holiday site, she will be there. Was it mentioned in the letters?" This may be faster than searching the bookshelf, he thought. But Jack's negative answer meant although he wrote about the holiday, no specific place was mentioned. Instead the two men swiftly travelled to the billiard room and examined its contents. News Papers, an atlas, literary works including Shakespeare. But one book stood smaller, and further back from the others; hidden from a casual eye. A green, bound book that when removed, a slip of paper fell out. It read ' Thetford, High Lodge. Wear something nice, proposal?' Bingo. The detectives returned to their car and drove to a small cabin B&B, where they informed the rest of the investigatory team about the find and told them to meet with a few officers tomorrow at 9am. Luckily, Thetford wasn't far away, but it was surrounded by forest and both men were incredibly tired. Within minutes of laying down, the delicate embrace of sleep had caught each of them.

The next morning, rich emerald pine surrounded the lodge, enveloping it in secrecy and olden-time charm. As the men wandered the trail up to the front door, it became obvious that the lodge wasn't a single accommodation, but rather a hotel of sorts. The lady at reception welcomed the two with a smile and when questioned about Mrs Fletcher, nodded and gave them the information they had most hoped to receive: she was still checked in. *Kkrrgh* the radio on Agent Crawford's belt crackled into life, "We have the building surrounded, proceed with caution."
"That will be all, Miss" his thick voice dismissed the receptionist and he strode towards the staircase.
"She will know we are coming," Will murmured, "we have to be fast if we want to catch her." they hastened towards her room. Splintering into a thousand tiny shards, the hinges of the door collapsed under Jack's force and the entrance to the murderer's room was opened. Cautiously, they scanned the room, clothes were hung in wardrobes, the bed was messy enough to indicate she had slept there the previous night, and the ensuite door was locked. Will nodded in its direction.
"Miss, this is the police, we urge you to come out with your hands above your head" Jack commanded."Leave me alone" a shriek of desperation. "Ma'am you know we can't do that, not after what you did to your husband. Open the door, you have 10 seconds." The woman sobbed and the click of the door lock sounded throughout the room. She swung the door open and collapsed onto the ground with her hands held high. Jack spoke back to his radio, "She's been caught, stand down." By this time, Will had already began to handcuff her, and had started to lead her out of the room.
"Don't you understand, Agent? Don't you know what it's like to think someone knows and

loves you, but to have them betray you like that?" Her words played their own tune of sorrow and pain, but when he paused, she knew her song had resonated within him.

Later, Will found himself in the presence of a tall, slender man with salt and pepper hair. His torso was wrapped in a splendid black shirt and a white coat draped comfortably over his shoulders.
"Good evening, agent...?" When he spoke, the letters were crisp and European, not the standard British that Will was accustomed to. "Uh, no, not an agent. I help on cases, but it's a visitor badge. My name is Will Graham, and you?" he walked further in to the crematorium as he spoke, to the furnace room. A blaze was being prepared in the belly of the building.
"Nice to meet you Mr Graham. I am Hannibal Lecter, the new employee here to take over after Dr Brown's retirement. I was not aware that people come to watch the burning, is it common?" He leaned toward Will and gazed upon him, seemingly analysing his new acquaintance. While also swiftly fuelling the furnace to raise the heat. Will didn't look his companion in the eye, but instead traced his face momentarily to become familiar with it. High cheekbones promoted the pride he held himself with, and yet he did not look hubristic. His features formed a soft smile as he listened to what Will would say next.
"The public aren't allowed in here, but I doubt they would want to be anyway; most are preoccupied with the hanging." His words were calm and honest, but an undertone of disgust was laced throughout.
"Not one for watching the hanging yourself, Mr Graham?" He cocked his head slowly and his intrigue was evident.
"Please, just 'Will'," he corrected as he leant back against the dark brick wall, "I don't like to support the sport they make out of catching the murderers," Now his eyes did lock with Dr Lecter's, "They may be killers but that doesn't mean they should be treated like monsters. Each one has a reason that would seem normal to them, just, but the rest of us decide it isn't right." Hannibal listened closely to what the shorter man said, his attention fully captured by his words.
Until finally, the body of Anna Fletcher was wheeled in and set up on the table to burn.
"You should get going now, the fire is ready, too hot for most people." he gestured to the cavernous mouth of flame in front of him. But when Will rolled up his sleeve to reveal a scarred arm, he was understood. While walking towards the exit, he explained, "3rd degree, permanent loss of feeling."
By his tone, Hannibal could tell it was too early in their relationship to ask any questions, so instead he let him go with only "We will see each other again, Will."

And he knew what he would do to ensure it.

Grass snakes and adders

Chapter Summary

New case and first meal

Chapter Notes

This one is a little shorter than the previous one but it's more interesting. The proper story is beginning now.

The late afternoon sun warmed Will's face, providing some relief from an otherwise shivering day. While he walked, his hands held onto the hilt of the lead, and Winston yapped up ahead to urge him on. Weekly, his dogs (Winston and Buster) needed a longer trail than usual, so it came about that Will visited the worn, charcoal chalet in the woods to allow them this stretch. They bounded with delight along the overgrown path, satisfied barks occasionally echoing through the trees.
"Come on you two," Will smiled, dragons breath dancing on the air around his words, "You're surely out of energy now?" He liked talking to his dogs, therapeutic, given almost every other conversation revolved around death. It was nice to be able to have yips and barks in response instead of weary looks and hidden expressions.

They didn't stop though. The wolfy fur galloped faster toward the dilapidated mansion. Will cocked his head and furrowed his brow, before quickening his pace to the entrance. He debated to himself what could have them so wrapt, only to have the stench of copper whisk up his nose. Last week, there had been no such scent but here, today, its pungent perfume was overpowering everything else. Whatever it was, it had clearly been here for days.

Hastily, he stepped over the charred boundary of the house and into the main hall. Around him, the remains of the once beautiful building with its intricate wallpaper lay in ruin. Only beams and scraps of furnishings remained, thick with soot. Each glace around the haunted shell drew sweat to the nape of Will's neck as his anticipation grew greater and greater. Until, there upon the cold, hard floor, lay the body of a man whose interior was decorated with flowers. His corpse was pale white and drained of all blood, his arms held out to the side as if upon a cross, and nails in his wrists mimicked those of somebody crucified.

One hour later
"Will, tell me what you see," Jack stepped closer to Will, his beige fedora tipping towards the smaller man, "There are flowers, is he trying to undermine this man's masculinity?"

Removing his glasses, Will pinched the bridge of his nose and angled his head down, “He’s not here to disgrace, Jack. He’s trying to tell us something, the flowers will have some kind of…significance.” He gestured to the scene in front of him. “Do we know anything about their meaning?”
“Daffodils; lovely, yellow daffodils.” A shorter, enthusiastic man with grey-blonde hair approached the pair from behind, clearly having heard their conversation. Jack welcomed Dr Price with a handshake and ushered him towards the body.
“Yellow daffodils-or genus narcissus-can have a lot of meanings: trust, forgiveness, rebirth. Though I assume from this man’s situation, he was not forgiven.”
“You don’t say,” Jack paused, and turned to Will, coercing out a response with a stare. He took a moment, rubbed his palms about his face and breathed deeply. It was evident that whatever motor it was in his mind that could de and reconstruct so brilliantly, was running at full efficiency.

When he spoke, the words flowed as if pre-scripted by the murderous artist, “The victim didn’t know his killer, this isn’t personal, but it is intentionally positioned. How long had he been there?” he gazed up through his eyebrows at Price, who replied “three or four, but the lack of blood made it difficult to date.”
“Whoever killed this man was planning the ‘exhibition’ for a while, but didn’t have a reason to do it yet. Daffodils bloom in March, not September, so he must have the means to vernalise and incubate the bulb. But the victim wasn’t important, only the image. Three days, crucifixion, rebirth, narcissus. He wants us to know him, to see him, and understand his art. He sees himself in high esteem, and is telling us how dormant he has been.”
“Dormant?”
“Not…doing what he was before.” He furrowed his brow, “Something he enjoyed but abstained from.”
“He’s going to start again.”

Will’s home, that evening.
Door rattling behind him, Will sank back into solitude. His eyelids weighing more with each blink. But on the ground, a white envelope with a red wax seal demanded his attention. He tilted his head and groaned as he bent over to collect it, noting his name written neatly in calligraphy on the back. He slid his rough fingers under the seal and peeled open the letter. It read as follows:
‘*Dear Will Graham,*
It would be my most honest pleasure to have you for dinner tomorrow at my estate. I will provide a three-course meal, and a home-brewed red wine. There is no requirement for you to furnish the meal yourself, however you may bring a wine if you so desire.
I look forward to dining with you,
Dr Hannibal Lecter.’
Will’s gaze softened upon seeing the signed name. He had found himself growing fond of Dr Lecter’s company, and even visited the crematorium when there was nobody scheduled to be cremated just to see his new co-worker. Setting the paper down on his desk, Will sighed quietly and then prepared himself for bed.

The next day at Hannibal’s estate.
Will brushed himself down and straightened his jacket. His clothes were certainly not of high class, but they were smart enough for him. A simple blue shirt with a plaid jacket over the top

wrapped his torso and lead neatly into simple brown trousers, incomparable to the elegance of the house before him; tall beige brick stacked in patterns between rich oak columns and large windows with blinds drawn across them. Will reached the door but before he could raise his hand to knock, the click of the lock broke the silence and the door opened. Aromas immediately swirled through into the outside world and Hannibal gave Will a welcoming look and motioned inside, “Come in, Will. I will show you to the dining room.”

Whilst following Hannibal’s lead, Will took a moment to appreciate the interior design of the house. Everything was slightly in the past, with the only modern inventions being the radio and cooking equipment. Once they arrived in the dining room, Will seated himself facing the fireplace. It was a granite hearth with brilliant wooden art pieces on the mantle, and a painting framed above it. Hannibal watched as Will admired his rooms, purposefully not interrupting his thoughts as he wanted Will to be comfortable enough to initiate conversation himself. The only comment he made being that he was going to the kitchen to bring the food through, followed up by ‘perfect timing’ from Will.

A piece of classical music began to play, accompanying the smell of the meal (stronger now as Hannibal approached). “Smells great,” Will began, “What is it?” he watched as the plate was put down in front of him.
“Braised short ribs,” the well-dressed man responded, “Alongside black barley and portobello mushrooms. Wine?” He gained a mumble of approval from Will, who had picked up his fork already and begun to eat. The deep red flowed smoothly into the glass, swirling with impeccable precision. Will blinked a little heavier than usual and briefly shrugged his eyebrows, shaking off the feeling. Hannibal spoke and it brought him comfort, so he focused on that instead.
“I heard about what you discovered yesterday, I’m sorry Will, it must’ve been a shock.” His pitch didn’t fluctuate and his tone never rose, but there was never a feeling of superiority about the way he spoke. The younger man raised his head in response, “It wasn’t your fault. It was the ‘***Diaemus***’ as they’re calling him. Disrespectful in my opinion, makes him sound like some sort of animal” he scraped the last of the mushrooms into a pile and ate them.
“A vampire bat. Given the state of the body, it’s suitable.” A shift in Will’s temperament caught Hannibal’s eye, leading him to gently provoke him for a better insight.
“Could somebody be trying to mimic what they used to do? Vampires haven’t been sighted in years.” Again, when the shorter man heard ‘vampire’ his jaw tensed momentarily.
This time Will sat up straighter and asked “How come you know about vampires? They were kept out of the public eye as much as possible.”
“Working in a crematorium, you see enough grass snakes to spot an adder.”
The curly haired man nodded “Of course, I should have known, and your history in surgery I’m sure must’ve helped too.”
Dr Lecter didn’t reply to the comment, and instead elected to ignore the attempted change in subject.
“They disappeared around 6 years ago, but I remain to learn the reason why. Rumour talks of arson and the accident that followed; however, rumour changes her story to entice those listening.”

Before Will could speak, Hannibal stood up and took both empty plates through to his kitchen, retrieving dessert in the process. It was a much more simple-but by no means less delicious- ‘Eaton Mess’. When he returned, a look of contemplation and decision was

displayed upon his companion's face. This caused him to remain quiet as he placed the dishes on the table and refilled the wine with his homebrewed red.
"She didn't change that story." He brushed his sleeve up to reveal his scarring more clearly. "3rd degree, my nerves are fried so there isn't much temperature-wise that can affect me greatly on the outside." There was something about the older man that drew answers out of Will to questions that hadn't been asked. Aware of this, he held his tongue as not to share something he would soon regret.
"I should be going now; my dogs will need feeding."
"Of course. I'll walk you to the door."
The anticipation of friendship clasped Hannibal's fingers long after he shook hands and parted ways with Will. And in his mind, memories clicked into place.

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